

Using Internet-based Mapping to Improve the Accessibility of Intertidal and Backshore Inventory and Ecological Evaluation Information for Victoria and Esquimalt Harbours

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Abstract

The Victoria and Esquimalt Harbours Environmental Action Program (VEHEAP) is a multi-agency group implementing an environmental action plan for Victoria and Esquimalt Harbours. A key element of the program is the Harbours Ecological Inventory and Rating (HEIR) project, which consists of a systematic inventory of the backshore and intertidal features of the harbours and a subsequent ecological rating of these features. The intent of the HEIR project is to support more ecologically sound land and water planning decisions.

An inventory of intertidal and backshore features of the harbour was conducted in 1998, and a five point, qualitative ecological rating (very high, high, medium, low, very low) of these features carried out using four evaluation criteria (species diversity, habitat diversity, natural habitat, and presence of key life cycle requisites). The information was initially presented in conventional report and map folio format, and the supporting inventory data was available by requesting that VEHEAP provide the complex database or GIS output. In 2002 the HEIR inventory was revised and updated with the objective of producing results that are more accessible and easily distributed to harbour management agencies, municipal planners, land owners and community groups. To achieve this objective, the database and GIS mapping products were extensively revised and deployed as an Internet mapping (ArcIMS) site to allow the user to readily access the database components, including the underlying rationale for the ecological evaluation ratings. This paper will demonstrate the ArcIMS product and discuss the role of this environmental management tool in planning for and management of foreshore areas.